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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses education reform and the need to involve communities in making significant changes to the educational system. The introductory section discusses schools as communities of learners. In such schools the community emerges from a collaborative relationship among parents, community institutions, and the school. Schools will be successful in a milieu where there is a vibrant understanding of responsibility, where there is an understanding by parents and community institutions that the children living in that community are their responsibility. The goal is to create communities of engagement and involvement. The second section, "Telling Stories," contrasts the Grand Inquisitor in "The Brothers Karamazov" with the leadership style of Moses in the biblical Book of Numbers concluding that the role of the organizer is to stir people into action around the things that are important to them. Section three, "Communities of Collaboration," is the story of the transformation of Zavala Elementary School in Austin (Texas) from the worst performing school in its district to one of the best through parental and community engagement. The concluding section, "Collaborations of Conversations," reviews the rules of engagement and the relational power that is part of collaboration and the judgment necessary to make successful compromises. (ND)

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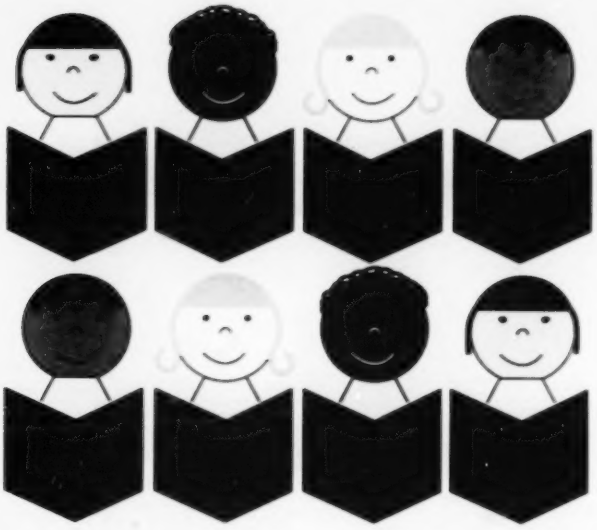

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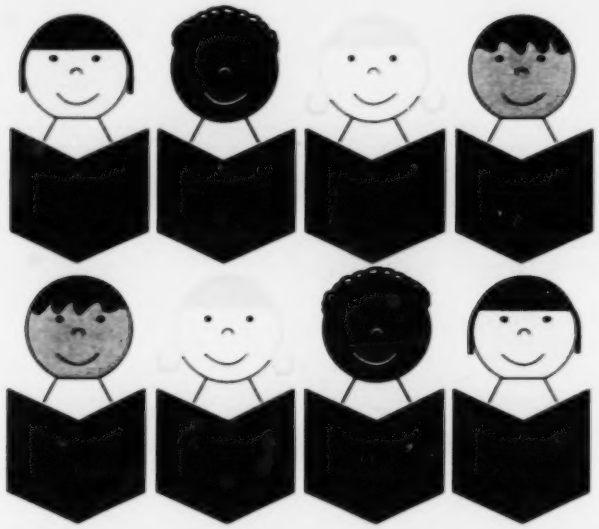

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Partners in Learning Series

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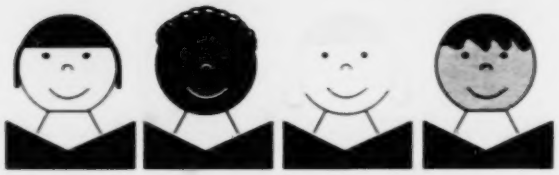
A Community of Stories: Involving Citizens in Education Reform



I'm concerned about public education and the challenges that are facing it. And I'm deeply indebted to you for inviting me here, because I know what you're about is teaching—teachers of public education. My daughter is now teaching, I'm proud to say, at an elementary school on the southwest side of San Antonio. So I'm concerned about schools because I'm concerned about her future as a teacher, and the quality of engagement that she'll have in the teaching profession. But, I'm also concerned about public education because I'm a parent. Besides my oldest daughter, I have two younger children, ages 13 and 17, who are enrolled in the Austin Independent School District, and I'm concerned about the quality of education that they're receiving.

I'm also concerned because as a citizen I think public schools are vital to my vision and my understanding of how a democratic culture ought to be. And so I'm very concerned about the pressures to privatize schools, school vouchers, the shrinking tax base, and the increased bashing of public education along with the anxiety that's been created. On the other hand, I'm also aware that there are enormous and significant reform efforts underway. As a parent, a citizen, and an organizer, I think I'm reasonably literate about some of the issues that are confronting public education. I'm concerned about what I'm reading now about the polls, the opinion surveys, and the focus groups regarding the fact that many, many people feel somewhat disengaged, disconnected, and unhappy with public schools.

Coming out of this is a lot of frustration. I just read recently that the American Federation of Teachers is talking about a back-to-basics kind of strategy. Although I think schools have to be about developing capability and competence in things like addition, subtraction, and multiplication, I think it would be a very sad state of affairs if we gave up some of the more interesting and innovative dimensions of the school reform agenda because we got cold feet. I know a lot of you are really concerned about the religious right. And I know that you think that they are organizing people and mobilizing people around their fears and their anxieties, and I am concerned about that, too.

However, I'm also concerned that we don't understand that there is something right about the religious right, albeit they're wrong about how they think about school reform and what they want to do about it. But there is something fundamentally correct about what they are saying, and that is there has to be a moral dimension to education; a moral dimension to teaching. There has to be a commitment on the part of teachers in schools to develop the character of the children that they are accountable for and responsible for.

I've always been impressed with an essay that I read many, many years ago by Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*. Whitehead said that the most dangerous thing is the power of inert ideas—ideas that aren't thrown into fresh combinations, ideas which aren't rethought. Secondly, he said that the worst thing that happens in schools is that we stuff kids with disconnected information that has nothing to do with their lives nor their experience. Third, we don't really try to develop the capacity of kids to inquire and to be curious and to have imagination. Fourth, we don't really think seriously about the fact that education has to be about reverence, duty, and the importance and value of an insistent present—a present which has in it all that is to come, and all that it has been; a present which allows kids then to understand and appreciate tradition, which is the living ideas of the dead vs. traditionalism, which is the dead ideas of the living. This insistent present tells kids: you are not isolated—you are responsible for future generations.

...communities are developing a capacity within young people to understand and tell their story.

Now, I thought that was a very important essay. We ought to understand that there has to be that moral dimension to education. Because Whitehead ultimately ends the essay saying that if we don't teach kids reverence and respect for life, and if we don't teach them style and appreciation of beauty and sensitivity to human feeling, then schools are not very important.

What the religious right is right about is that the schools have to be about the developing the capacity of young people to have this kind of moral content and moral character. However, this is not going to be possible if the culture of the school is disconnected from the culture of the community. The only way that kids are going to develop an understanding of tradition and a moral dimension is if they are part of communities that are aware of and telling their story; communities are developing a capacity within young people to understand and tell their story.

Whether their story is that they are Mexicano and came across the border, as I did, not too long ago (my father was a Mexican citizen until he was in his forties); or whether they were people like a theologian from Duke University named Stanley Horowitz who says that he is poor white trash and grew up in Grand Prairie near Dallas, and that's his story; or the story of some of our organizers whose parents grew up in mining communities or stories of some of our people whose parents were steel workers and truck drivers. There are all kinds of stories out there, and all kinds of communities with the capacity to develop kids' understanding of their own story and identity; story and identity are interconnected. Unfortunately, this appreciation of stories is something which schools view as unimportant and largely irrelevant.

My wife, a professional storyteller, once had a contract with a school district in San Antonio to teach teachers how to tell stories and develop the capacity of kids to tell stories. Some of her best friends, who are elementary school teachers, told her they didn't want her in their classrooms for two reasons. One, they didn't know how to tell a story and didn't want to betray their ignorance in front of the kids. Two, they didn't have time. They didn't have time because their class were so organized towards "teaching to the tests," so that the kids could do well with the most recent rendition of accountability.

This attitude, unfortunately, is fairly pervasive in many schools. And so, as a consequence, that which is extremely important about education—about the common schools, about the development of the capacity of kids to learn, inquire, and develop their curiosity and agitate their vision—is largely absent. Kids are learning how to become test takers, or as Mr. Poston says in his book, they enter schools as question marks and leave as periods.

Now, because of our concern about schools, both as parents and as citizens, the people in the Industrial Areas Foundation organizations have been trying to figure out what it is that's wrong with schools, and how to engage them. After some analysis, we've come to a conclusion: even though we don't understand enough about curriculum and all these other very important things, we do know that schools ought to be communities of learners for teachers, principals, and administrators as well as kids. Schools ought to be communities of learners where that community emerges out of a collaborative relationship among parents, community institutions, and the school.

In Texas, we've developed the Alliance Schools which are an effort to build this kind of understanding between institutions, linking a broad-based IAF organization with schools, congregations, and other community institutions to develop a vibrant concept of citizenship. Part of our assumption is that schools are only going to work in a milieu where there is a vibrant understanding of responsibility, where there is a understanding by parents and community institutions that the kids who live in that community are their responsibility— not just the responsibility of the biological parents.

Let me see if I can be a little bit more concrete. I'm a Roman Catholic. We take very seriously in my tradition this whole notion of baptism. But what baptism is all about is not only about the infant. It is rather about what goes on inside the context of the communion. Because what happens in the public proclamation of baptism is that there are sponsors (adults who symbolize the entire community) who say, "We as the sponsors, the godparents, take full responsibility, not just for ourselves, but for the community as to the well-being of this child." So we can no longer say, "Whose child is this?" We have to say, "This child is our child. This child belongs to us. What happens to this child is our responsibility."

...schools ought to be communities of learners for teachers, principals, and administrators as well as kids.

Now, I don't think Roman Catholicism is the only tradition which embraces that notion. It exists in every people.

What we are about is trying to figure out how do you create that kind of moral community of learners which accepts that responsibility? Oh, you can talk about how it takes a whole village to raise a child. But I hate to say that, because everybody says it now, and it has become a mantra.

Robert Putnam wrote an interesting article, "Bowling Alone," in *The Journal of Democracy*. In the article, Putnam talks about how there has been an increase in bowling by 10 percent in recent years. But there has been a decrease in the number of people who bowl in leagues by 40 percent. The way he knows this is because there has been a significant decline in beer sales in bowling alleys. When people used to bowl in leagues, there would be eight people on a team, one person would be bowling at a time, and the other people would be talking, but also drinking. As

a consequence of the fact that we are bowling by ourselves, beer sales have dropped significantly.

Putnam's "bowling alone" notion is a metaphor for what's occurring across the board in our communities, because there's been a significant decline in civic engagement in all kinds of institutions—Kiwanis Clubs, Junior League, PTAs, labor unions, political parties, voting, etc. This is a withdrawal into a kind of—in Christopher Lasch's phrase—culture of narcissism; John Kenneth Galbraith's culture of contentment; Robert Reich's succession of the successful. There has been this creation of an excessive, atomistic, disconnected individual who's be-all and end-all is consumption and entertainment, who reifies his or her capacity to make choices, express opinions.

Putnam's other point is that if you want to measure the success of children (no pregnancy, stay in school and out of jail), or if you want to put responsibility on a group of adults, don't put it on the parents, because they are not so determinant. The more important group are the neighbors—the people who live in that immediate environment or the people with whom that child interacts. So that I have to think about what my son is doing when he's next door playing with my neighbor's son Scott. What kind of character and vision have my neighbors imbued into Scott? If I really care about Jacob, I have to think about the parental impact on the kids he associates with in school and in the community, because they're going to have a much more powerful set of expectations and impact on him than my wife or I will.

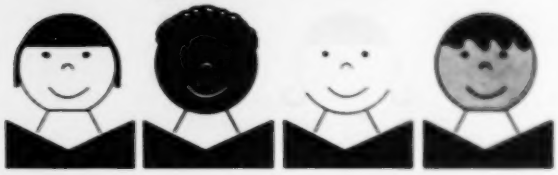
...the Iron Rule [is] never, ever do for anybody what he or she can do for themselves.

I think you can see why I'm a little concerned about how we're off center, when we think about schools. We focus totally on what goes on between the teacher and the student, or between the parents and the kids, and forget that a powerful set of expectations are created by that context in which my child and other children like him grow up in. If James Coleman is right at all in his analysis of what he calls "social capital" in determining the capacity of schools to succeed, we are going to have to work on developing the capacity of teachers, principals, and other school personnel to allow the engagement of parents and other community people.

I know parents are a pain in the neck. They're irritants, they don't know anything, they're yahoos. They have all kinds of expectations and they like to point the finger. But if we are going to do anything significant, we're going to have to try to create, recreate, or tap into some kind of community of engaged adults—not just parents, but citizens; not just consumers of education, but people who are willing to see that they have a stake in producing quality education.

What we're trying to create are communities of engagement and involvement that understand some basic universals. The first one is the Iron Rule—never, ever do for anybody what he or she can do for themselves. Because nonadherence to that rule means creating institutions which promote dependency and passivity, subject-to-object relationships, hierarchical power, and the role of the expert, all of which tend to alienate people from those schools and institutions which are important to their lives.

Telling Stories



Now, to really understand the Iron Rule, I'd like to tell you a little story by a very famous Mexican author named Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. I like to claim Dostoevsky as a Mexicano, because he has an understanding of the Mexican soul. He understands the intermingling of tragedy and irony and how we appear on the outside, but inside, we have all this pain and sorrow and sadness.

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan tells a dream to his younger brother. In the dream, Christ comes back to earth during the Spanish Inquisition and is immediately recognized by all the people. They celebrate his being there and all kinds of miracles are performed. But he's also recognized by the Grand Inquisitor, who has him thrown into jail.

> The Grand Inquisitor comes to see him in the dead of night, and he says to Christ, why did you come back? You've said everything you can possibly have to say, it's all been written down, you can't change one word of it. Besides, we tried it your way, and it doesn't work. For hundreds of years, we offered men faith, we thought they wanted to be free, we thought they wanted to be determinant, we thought they wanted to be engaged.
>
> But they don't want to be free. They want to be taken care of. They want magic and mystery and authority in their lives. So, desperately, a few of us came to this conclusion that it wouldn't work, and so we made a deal with the other guy. And we accepted the temptations that you rejected. And now, in your name, using your words, we give people what they want. We give them magic and mystery and authority, so be gone, we don't need you anymore.
>
> And so, the story ends—Christ kisses him and goes out in the dead of night.

The Grand Inquisitor holds certain assumptions about people—that people are children that need to be taken care of and ruled by the experts. The Grand Inquisitor is alive and well in most of our institutions. He's alive in our schools, he's particularly alive in the workplace, he's alive in most of our churches, and I think he might even rule our universities, where I'm told the definition of a lecture course is where the professor's notes go from his notebook to that of the student without ever going through the head of either one of them.

But there's another style of leadership, which is in the Book of Numbers and embodies the Iron Rule. It involves the other Chicano leader, Moses. Moses was raised

as a prince in the house of Pharaoh, by the daughter of Pharaoh. But he was also raised by a Hebrew woman. Now, the word "Hebrew" is an interesting word, because it does not refer to a race of people—it's not an ethnic term. It refers to status. A Hebrew means anybody who is an outcast, anybody who is on the run. Moses was taught by his mother to identify with those who were Hebrew—to those who were despised, who were considered to be the filthy, ill-begotten sons and daughters of nameless, wandering Aramayans.

So he identifies with those people, and so he comes across an Egyptian overseer oppressing a Hebrew (and being a very calculated and very volatile fellow), Moses looks around to make sure that nobody's watching, then he kills the Egyptian and buries him deep in the sand. The next day, he comes across two Hebrews arguing with each other. And he says to them, "You know, you're brothers, you shouldn't be doing this." And one of them says to Moses, "By whose authority do you tell us what to do, Moses? Who made you Lord over us, and what are you going to do to me, Moses, if I don't do what you say? Are you going to kill me like you did the Egyptian?"

Moses realizes his deed is known. How is this possible? The Egyptian is dead; he didn't squeal. There was no one else around, so who squealed on Moses? The guy he helped turned him in. His own people, so Moses says, I don't need this. So he goes to the suburbs, gets a good job, marries the boss's daughter, big home, big swimming pool. Moses has got it made, except he's got a problem: he's got a memory, and an identity, and his identity is rooted in the memory of those stories that were told to him by his mother. His identity is rooted in the memory of the community of people who tell stories, and this memory and tradition are so powerful that it comes to Moses like a still voice, evoking his anger.

But his anger, by this time, is dispassionate and disinterested, a mature kind of anger that is like a burning bush, a fire that doesn't consume. Moses hears his own inner voice, and Yahweh's voice. He hears the oppression of his people, because the Hebrews are like a lot of teachers—they do a lot of groaning and moaning. So Yahweh tires of all this groaning and moaning, and agitates and confronts Moses. And Moses says, "The people have rejected my leadership." "Don't sweat it, Moses," says Yahweh. "I'm going to put together a sponsoring committee. You tell them that the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob sent you." Moses says, "Wait a minute, I don't know the lingo anymore. My Spanish is kind of rusty, I've been away from the community a long time." Yahweh says, "Moses, your job is not to be the charismatic leader, but to assemble the core team of leaders, like your brother Aaron, your sister Miriam, Joshua, Caleb. Their job is to agitate and organize other people by mentoring and guiding them. Your job, Moses, is to identify, test, and train the leadership."

But there's another style of leadership, which is in the Book of Numbers and embodies the Iron Rule. It involves the other Chicano leader, Moses.

So Moses, to free his people from Pharaoh's army, organizes all kinds of actions. They ask for a day off and Pharaoh gives them a day off, and then Pharaoh reacts, and then, you know, they've got to do all these big, tough actions.

Anyhow, he frees his people from Pharaoh's army, and gives them manna from heaven, but the Hebrews go to Moses and say, "What have you done for us lately?

Back in Egypt, we used to have it good. Back in Egypt, we had garlics and leeks and cucumbers and fish every day for free. Now, we've got nothing to eat but this crummy manna."

Moses confronts Yahweh and says, "Why do you put this burden on me? They're your people, not mine—you made the promises, but I've got to carry them around in my breast like a wet nurse"

So Yahweh says, "Moses, you're a real jerk. Your father-in-law, Jethro, explained it to you. You're supposed to identify, test-out and train the leadership, you're not supposed to be the charismatic leader. You're supposed to be mentoring and guiding people. So gather your 70 best leaders and bring them there to the tent of the meeting, and there I'm going to put the burden you're feeling on them."

...the role of the agitator, of the organizer, is to stir people into action in and around those things that are important to them...

Moses does what he's told. He gathers his 70 best leaders and says, "Look—you want meat to eat, there's quail out there. Go out and form foraging parties. I'll mentor you and I'll guide you, I'll teach you, I'll show you how to do research actions, I'll show you how to do individual meetings, I'll train you in all the techniques. But I ain't gonna do it for you, because I'm not going to violate the Iron Rule. My job is not to take care of you. My job is stirring you into action. What that means is getting you to recognize that your interests require that you act on them."

So Moses understands from Yahweh that the role of the agitator, of the organizer, is to stir people into action in and around those things that are important to them: their families, their property and their education of their children, which of course is the stuff of what Aristotle said was the substance of politics.

Communities of Collaboration

We're going to have to develop communities which understand this notion of politics, and understand this kind of civic culture. What we're trying to do with the Alliance of Schools is to build this kind of communities of collaboration.

Zavala Elementary School in Austin, Texas, was the worst performing school in the Austin Independent School District. It was made up of primarily kids from housing projects, about 69 percent Mexicano, the rest African-American and some Anglo-American kids. The school was a dumping ground for the Austin Independent School District. It had a turnover ratio in teachers about 25 percent, very low morale, and the worst attendance record of any elementary school in the district. A new school principal named Alejandro Melton heard we'd been organizing in other schools and asked us for help.[1]

We said, "Okay, Mr. Melton, if you really want to do something about Zavala, you're going to have to tell the parents the truth, and the truth is that even though the kids are going home with A's and B's on their report cards, they're really doing C and D work. If you look at all the TAAS test scores, they're at least two and three grade levels behind." Being a new principal, he immediately said he couldn't do this. It would be wrong; the staff would totally turn against him.

But we challenged him and said, "Look, if you aren't willing to tell the parents the truth, we don't want to have anything to do with this." And so he reluctantly agreed, and called a big parents' meeting. The parents were able to compare their kids' test scores with their report cards and found that their kids were doing very poorly, although prior to the meeting, the parents thought that they were doing well.

Well, it created a rather acrimonious and difficult meeting. The parents grew ballistic. The teachers felt Mr. Melton had betrayed them because he had exposed them to the wrath of all the parents. Mr. Melton thought we were nuts, because we had asked him to do this kind of situation. Finally, our organizer said, "We can keep shouting at each other, or we can begin to develop some sort of collaborative relationship and take some kind of action."

They began to do house meetings—8, 10, 12 parents, sometimes 30 parents—and began to get parents engaged in conversations about what was occurring in the school. One of their problems was a lot of the kids didn't go to school because they were sick a lot, so they organized in large numbers, 350-400 working with the IAF organizations,

[1]Murnane, R. J. and F. Levy. *Teaching the New Basic Skills*. New York: Free Press, 1996, Ch. 4.

and went to the city council and got an immunization clinic for Zavala. Another problem was a lot of kids were from single-parent homes and coming home to empty houses, and so they organized an afterschool program at Zavala. They began to organize tutoring programs, then they discovered that in the school's 20-year history, no Zavala kid had ever attended Kealing Middle School, a magnet school and a science academy.

So then they persuaded the school board to allow Zavala to have a sixth grade in collaboration with the University of Texas and created a Zavala Science Academy to prepare Zavala kids to attend Keeling. Today, there are 20 Zavala kids in Kealing Middle School.

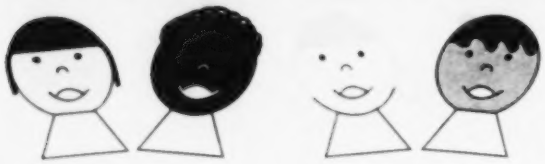
To make a long story short, Zavala went from being the worst performing school in the Austin Independent School District, one where less than 20 percent of the kids passed the TAAS Test, to one where now 95 percent of the kids now pass the test. The school now has one of the highest attendance records and, instead of having a teacher turnover ratio of 25 percent every year, now has a waiting list of teachers in Austin Independent School District who want to come to Zavala. T.A. Vasquez, the PTA president, has her office in the school. She and other parents are part of the hiring of every teacher. Zavala's experience created a climate in the Austin Independent School District where other schools wanted the same kind of model. And so now there are 25 elementary schools in Austin Independent School District who are coming together to try to create these kinds of communities of engagement.

I'm not here to praise Zavala or any other Alliance school in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. I don't think we're going to create the kind of schools which contribute to an understanding of our common faith and develop the capacity of kids to inquire, to be curious, to be disciplined, until we become effective and understand how to really create communities of learners—communities which teach not parental involvement, which can be everything from monitoring a cafeteria to laminating a chair, but parental and community engagement. That means developing the capacity of parents and community leaders to be literate, to understand the language of educational reform—competent and effective in engaging teachers and principals in serious, sustained conversations.

Not only can all kids learn at very high levels, parents can learn, if there's somebody to teach them and someone to mentor them. Not only parents can learn, but communities can learn if there are institutions which embody certain values and vision and are willing to teach them. And communities can learn people will agitate them.

Where the agitation takes place is an open question. One of the reasons why I'm a professional organizer is because I like to do this kind of thing. I love to agitate communities. I love to agitate schools. I love to agitate universities. I hope that maybe you might see that your role as educators or teachers is one of agitating people's vision, agitating their imagination. The word education, I think, comes from a Latin word *educere*, which means "to lead out" and implies that there is a leadership dimension in education. If we aren't about developing people's capacity to be leaders and initiators, then all we are is transmittors of certain information. This latter role is certainly not going to create the values and visions of the two great traditions, which I hope that we can all understand and appreciate, that of the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and of a democratic society—the values of a free and open society.

Collaborations of Conversations



Here's our problem. If collaboration is going to be real, we also must understand that there's power dimensions to it—relational power. Relational power means not only acting on somebody, but allowing him or her to act on you. Now relational power requires calculated vulnerability. It means that you have to allow the other person to penetrate you.

Now how do you do that? Through conversation. Most of us don't know what a real conversation is, because we practice what I call "station identification." This is who I am, this is what I've got; people say what they must, and then the next person does it and the next. In this "station identification," there's never any engagement. If they do listen, they really don't listen from the other's point of view, they don't try to understand the context, because they are trying to figure out, "What am I going to say next to refute him or her?" There's no real listening and no interest in figuring out the narrative underpinning the perspective. What is the story? What is the context? We don't really try to uncover each other's stories.

A real conversation requires listening to the other person's story, but it also requires interruption. There can be no real conversation without interrupting. It requires that both persons have standing and that they have a legitimate right to interrupt. So we don't just have set speeches. We actually have point-by-point interruptions that we negotiate.

Real conversations also require tension. Conflict. To be sure, the conflicts have to be constrained—we don't want to let people beat up on each other. We want people to make a commitment to nonviolence. But within that commitment to non- violence, we have to allow tension and conflict, because there are different traditions that have to emerge. Different perspectives. If we really believe in the mixed multitude and pluralism, then pluralism means that we have to respect one another's traditions, not just tolerating the fact that you have a different point of view than I do. It means that we'd be willing to engage and argue with each other.

A real conversation also requires that we enter the conversation with a disposition in favor of collaborative action, which means that we've got to be right, reasonable, make concessions, and compromise.

Now there's two kinds of compromises. There's the compromise of half a loaf, which is still bread and life-giving, and then there's the compromise of Solomon, which is half a baby. Half a baby is a corpse. So, in politics, it's not a question of do you compromise, it's which compromises do you make? That requires judgment.

Developing the capacity in people to engage in judgments means that they are willing to take their private opinions and prejudices and subject them to public scrutiny. We have to be willing to make explicit our objections, our difficulties. And we have to be willing to develop criteria so that if you're going to exercise judgment, you've got to be like a judge in a court of law—you've got to listen to the arguments. The arguments have within them rules of evidence and rules of admissibility. Well, the same thing also has to be taking place in a political argument.

We need to create a context where both the university understands what we mean by conversation and engagement, and that our community understands what we mean.

I'm suggesting that we have to teach people the rules of engagement. We have to develop communities where people are regarded as not powerful, learn the rules of engagement—communities where people know how to do politics.

Sometimes, in order to do that, we've got to get recognition. We talk about organizing for and organizing against. When you're organizing against, then you're trying to figure out how do I get the big bad university to give me standing? But once I get standing, then I've got to say, "I'm in, I'm at the table, now I've got to understand the rules of engagement." Because what goes well with protests and when you're trying to get a place at the table doesn't work when you're there.

The premise here is that the university or anybody for that matter understands what a conversation is. We need to create a context where both the university understands what we mean by conversation and engagement, and that our community understands what we mean. Probably, in most cases, neither one of them do, perpetuating this cacophony, which produces frustration, polarization, and alienation.

So let's see if we can't teach teachers who have the commitment to develop these kinds of communities to tell stories, develop the narrative, and develop kids to engage in these kind of serious conversations. These stories will make their lives more interesting and our whole community much more viable.

About the author...

ERNESTO CORTES, JR. is the southwest regional director of the Industrial Areas Foundations, known as IAF. Founded more than fifty years ago in Chicago, the IAF is a nonprofit institution devoted to providing leadership training to poor and moderate income people. It does so through more than 40 broad-based, multi-ethnic organizations in the United States and the United Kingdom. A native of San Antonio, Texas, Cortes has been involved in community organizing since 1973. His work has been highlighted in numerous books, newspaper articles, and documentaries. Cortes delivered this address at AACTE's 1996 Annual Meeting.

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